

THE  
**FUTURE  
OF  
AMERICA'S  
NATIONAL  
PARKS**

First Annual  
Centennial Strategy for

# Sand Creek Massacre National Historic Site

August 2007

CENTENNIAL INITIATIVE



**Site:** SAND

**Year:** 2007

### **Vision Statement**

Sand Creek Massacre NHS is the nation's newest park, established April 27, 2007. Its authorizing legislation identifies three purposes:

- \* Protect and preserve the site, including the topographic features that the Secretary determines are important to the site; artifacts and other physical remains of the Sand Creek Massacre; and the cultural landscape of the site, in a manner that preserves, as closely as practicable, the cultural landscape of the site as it appeared at the time of the Sand Creek Massacre;
- \* Interpret the natural and cultural resource values associated with the site and provide for public understanding and appreciation of, and preserve for future generations, those values;
- \* Memorialize, commemorate, and provide information to visitors to the site to enhance cultural understanding about the site; and to assist in minimizing the chances of similar incidents in the future.

To meet these purposes the park identified the following priorities:

- \* Collaborate with the Tribes and other park partners to accomplish all park goals;
- \* Provide a physical setting and infrastructure that enables descendants and the public to connect to their histories, their cultures and their values;
- \* Use effective planning processes and tools to open the park for public visitation and ensure short and long term financial sustainability.

By 2016 the park will have completed and implemented its management plans. Visitor appreciation and understanding will be fulfilled through programs, trails, and interpretive wayside exhibits on site and in a visitor center. The location of a visitor center will have been selected and the steps necessary to build it will have begun. Staffing necessary to provide for visitor understanding and appreciation will be in place and within the goals established by core operations analysis, budget cost projections, and OFS funding. The Sand Creek Massacre Research Center - a NPS/private collaboration - will be located in a renovated historic building in the park's gateway community. It will house Sand Creek Massacre archival collections from institutions across the country, providing a research facility where scholars, the public, and Sand Creek Massacre descendants may explore the causes, consequences, and implications of the event, establishing its relevancy to issues in the present day.

The park will have completed collection of natural and cultural resources data and will be managing and monitoring resources to accomplish legislated requirements regarding preservation of the site's 1864 cultural landscape.

The park's infrastructure will be in place to provide for visitor and employee safety and enjoyment. It will provide an example of a streamlined facilities operation that minimizes NPS ownership and associated life cycle maintenance costs.

The park's budget will be maintained for long-term sustainability, while meeting the park's purposes, goals, and objectives.

**Park/ Superintendent/ Program Manager**

Alexa Roberts

Site: SAND

STEWARDSHIP

☒ Provide inspiring, safe, and accessible places for people to enjoy - the standard to which all other park systems aspire.

☒ Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Complete and implement the park's first General Management Plan, identifying the best ways in which to provide and inspiring, safe, and accessible place for people to enjoy and learn.

☒ The work described currently is supported by OFS and/ or PMIS

Site: SAND

STEWARDSHIP

☒ **Improve the condition of park resources and assets.**

☒ **Rehabilitate high-priority historic buildings to good condition, and help communities to preserve their history through programs like Preserve America.**

The community of which the Sand Creek Massacre NHS is a part has recently received Preserve America Community status. Further, the community and surrounding communities have received a Preserve America grant for heritage tourism marketing. Currently, the park, the county, the Colorado Historical Society, the Colorado preservation Inc., the Colorado Department of Local Affairs and the General Services Administration are collaborating to renovate a historic building in the park's gateway community that will serve as the park's administrative headquarters and interim visitor center.

☒ The work described currently is supported by OFS and/ or PMIS

☒ **Restore native habitats by controlling invasive species and reintroducing key plant and animal species.**

The park has inventoried all of its habitats and plant and animal species. All invasive plants except one have been eliminated. Only one invasive animal species exists and is being monitored. Working through the CESU network, the park is currently conducting a study to determine its desired future conditions for the park's prairie grasslands. Management recommendations will be identified and implemented to achieve the desired vegetation community conditions. By 2016, the native habitats at SAND will be restored to a desired condition and all invasives will be controlled.

☒ The work described currently is supported by OFS and/ or PMIS

☒ **Improve high-priority assets to acceptable condition, as measured by the Facility Condition Index.**

Funding has been formulated for FY08 for the park to rehabilitate an existing structure on the site to a useable condition. The structure was formerly a ranch maintenance shop. It is being rehabilitated for use as the park's maintenance shop and conference room. It is the park's main high-priority asset.

☒ The work described currently is supported by OFS and/ or PMIS

☒ **Improve the natural resources in parks, as measured by the vital signs developed under the Natural Resource Challenge.**

The park has completed the inventories identified through the Service-wide Inventory and Monitoring Program plus some park specific inventories and is fully participating with the I&M program to stay on schedule with monitoring plans. The park has hired a natural resources manager to oversee the park's natural resources program. The park is utilizing the results of numerous and extensive natural resources research studies in the park to develop a natural

Site: SAND

STEWARDSHIP

☒ Improve the condition of park resources and assets.

resources management plan, and is also funded for a Resources Stewardship Plan in FY09. By 2016 the park will be managing its natural resources in keeping with the vital signs monitoring results developed by the Natural Resources Challenge.

☒ The work described currently is supported by OFS and/ or PMIS

☒ Complete all cultural resource inventories for designated priority resources.

Archaeological inventories have been completed for the park, all archaeological resources are in good condition and are current in the ASMIS data base. All park collections, including archaeological and archival, have been consolidated at WACC and all have been or are in the process of being catalogued. The park worked with WACC to create a duplicate set of archives on microfilm and CD so that WACC houses the original archives and the park still has a set. Determinations of NRHP eligibility for all historic resources have been completed or are in progress and the park's listing of historic properties in the LCS will be completed by FY08. Ethnographic studies have been initiated but are incomplete and the park has been seeking funds for an administrative history for several years without success. These studies will be completed by 2016.

☒ The work described currently is supported by OFS and/ or PMIS

Site: SAND

ENVIRONMENT

☒ Reduce environmental impacts of park operations.

☒ Reduce the environmental impacts of park operations on air and water quality.

The park is currently having little to no environmental impact on air and water quality and in fact may be improving water quality over the ranching operation that existed on the site prior to the park's presence. Future impacts to air and water quality may be reduced further in the future by the including of an alternative in the park's first GMP that would keep the park's visitor center and administrative operation in a remodeled historic building in the park's gateway community, rather than building a new visitor center and associated infrastructure on site, thus eliminating all the potential on-site environmental impacts associated with park facilities.

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Site: SAND

ENVIRONMENT

☒ Engage partners, communities, and visitors in shared environmental stewardship.

☒ Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

The park is surrounded by privately-owned ranchland. The park is implementing land management strategies within its boundaries that are not currently used by private land owners (such as eradication of tamarisk, achieving high-seral vegetation communities through a variety of tools including prescribed burning, mechanical treatments, potential grazing plans, etc.). Further, the park is maintaining a prairie dog colony because of its contribution to a healthy mixed-grass prairie mosaic of diverse plant and animal species, although controversial with adjacent landowners. The park is slowly establishing relations with neighboring landowners and offering assistance where possible to highlight these prairie-restoration efforts with the hope that a common land management ethic may one day develop across a broader area, involving federal and private land managers.

☐ The work described currently is supported by OFS and/ or PMIS

Site: SAND

RECREATION

☒ Encourage collaboration among and assist park and recreation systems at every level—federal, regional, state, local—to help build an outdoor recreation network accessible to all Americans.

☒ Rehabilitate over 2,000 miles of trails within or connected to national parks, including trails accessible to those with disabilities.

The Sand Creek Massacre NHS is a primary participant in the Southeast Colorado Regional Tourism Group which is a collaboration of federal, state, municipal and private entities throughout five counties in Southeastern Colorado. The group is currently working under a Preserve America grant to promote heritage tourism throughout the region, with the Sand Creek Massacre site as one of the primary anchor sites for the region. As part of this effort, the park has worked together with the Kiowa County Historic Preservation Commission to secure a grant from the NPS Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program to develop a series of trails in and among the historic resources of Kiowa County, including the park, intending to link the history of the park with historic resources throughout the remainder of the county.

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Site: SAND

RECREATION

☒ **Focus national, regional, and local tourism efforts to reach diverse audiences and young people and to attract visitors to lesser-known parks.**

☒ **Increase visitation by 25 percent at lesser-known parks through a national tourism effort aimed at helping people to discover the breadth of parks and experiences.**

The Sand Creek Massacre NHS works closely with the Southeast Colorado Regional Tourism Group and in turn the Colorado State Parks Department and the Colorado State Heritage Tourism program to promote tourism to Southeastern Colorado. The Southeast Colorado Regional Tourism Group is working under a Preserve America grant to implement a heritage tourism marketing strategy. As one of the only national park units in southeastern Colorado, SAND is integral to these efforts. The dedication ceremony for SAND as the nation's 391st unit on April 28, 2007 brought 2200 visitors to Kiowa County, about twice the number of residents in the whole county. During the dedication ceremony, Kiowa County and four other contiguous counties were awarded Preserve America Community status. Currently, the Southeast Colorado Regional Tourism group is working with NPS to look at the possibility of National Heritage Area status for the region.

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☒ **Increase the number of visitors that attend ranger-facilitated programs such as campfire talks, hikes, and school programs.**

The park has only been open for less than two months. Currently, based on staffing and facilities, it is only open three days per week. The park, located in a very remote area, is receiving about 100 visitors per weekend. As park budgets increase, along with the staffing to accommodate more open hours, the number of visitors that attend ranger-facilitated programs will also increase.

☒ The work described currently is supported by OFS and/ or PMIS



Site: SAND

EDUCATION

☒ Cooperate with educators to provide curriculum materials, high-quality programs, and park-based and online learning.

☒ Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

Although the park is in a rural area, the story of the Sand Creek Massacre is well known and is receiving considerably more attention due to the opening of the national historic site. For two years in a row, the park has been visited by a Colorado state coalition of teachers who are developing curriculum for inclusion of Cheyenne and Arapaho history into Colorado state teaching standards. The park participated in a teacher-training program through the Gilder-Lehrman Institute, which lead to the possibility of a Gilder-Leherman grant for integration of Sand Creek Massacre history in to the curricula of several regional school districts. The park will be entering into the teacher-ranger-teacher program in the near future.

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Site: SAND

EDUCATION

☒ Impart to every American a sense of their citizen ownership of their national parks.

☒ Increase visitors' satisfaction, understanding, and appreciation of the parks they visit.

As the park is brand new, increasing visitor satisfaction, understanding and appreciation of parks can only get better! In addition to on-site visitor understanding and appreciation, the park participates in every local and regional community and public event it possibly can to help educate people in the region about the park's story and the value of national parks in general.

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Site: SAND

PROFESSIONALISM

☒ Use strategic planning to promote management excellence.

☒ Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

This brand new park is starting from a position of efficiency and "streamlined" management. The park will be staffed to a level that can be supported in the long run by OFS funds as identified by a completed Management Plan, Core Operations Analysis, and Budget Cost Projections. Further, facilities will only be developed for which life-cycle maintenance and staffing costs can be supported. In the long run, the park will rely on partnerships and private foundation collaborations to support off-site facilities and programs that do not require recurring park base funds to operate (such as planned county-owned facilities for park use in the gateway community, a foundation-funded research center, and so forth. This park is starting out on the basis of long-term sustainability without relying on extensive budget increases in the future.

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Site: SAND

PROFESSIONALISM

☒ Promote a safety and health culture for all employees and visitors.

☒ Reduce the number of employee lost-time incidents and serious visitor injuries by 20 percent.

The park will make every effort to maintain its current record of 0 lost-time incidents and visitor injuries.

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Site: SAND

PROFESSIONALISM

☒ Model what it means to work in partnership.

☒ Other Park/ Program performance goal(s)

SAND has been established and open for only a couple of months but getting there has taken eight years. Establishment would not have been successful without partnerships. By legislation and choice, the park works in partnership with four Cheyenne and Arapaho Tribes. The park maintains Cooperative Agreements with each tribe so they can fully participate in all park planning activities. The park also works in partnership with the State of Colorado and Kiowa County, maintaining four Cooperative Agreements with county entities. The County provides maintenance, fire and law enforcement services for the park. The park provides grant funds for the fire department and the sheriff's office. The park is working in partnership with the County, the CO Historical Society, CO Preservation Inc, CO Department of Local Affairs and GSA to renovate a historic building in the park's gateway community for park headquarters and a senior citizen's center. The park will now develop a strong friends group, a cooperating association, and maintain its partnership with the SE CO Regional Tourism Group, focusing on the park's role in helping sustain the larger region through heritage tourism and linkages.

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